

Book Review



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Meliscin, F. (2017). Gender, justice and equality: Creating capabilities for girls and women's development. London, UK, Palgrave Macmillan

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The book consists of eight chapters. This book elaborates on the capabilities approach, developed by Amartyase (1999) and Nussbaum (2000), engaging in women's live in Turkey.

Women in Turkey are located at crossroads embracing modernity and living under traditional and cultural norms. The book explores women's positioning, survival, resistance, freedom, well-being, and agency through the clash of multifaceted sociological phenomena, such as religion, secularism, modernism, tradition, ethnicity, multilingualism, and paradoxes of culture and generations, both in the public and private spheres.

The book deals mainly with the suffering of the woman in spite of the declarations of humanitarian organizations on human rights in general and the rights of women in particular and their legitimate rights in gender equality, justice, and equality in education.

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The introductory chapter of the book provides a contextual and methodological framework for the book. It begins by focusing on current debates on gender, education, development, and problematizes the way current debates approach gender equality. Then, it introduces the Turkish context concerning issues in gender and education, testing out how the capabilities approach coupled with feminist theory can offer a better understanding of gender and education in Turkey. Finally, it sets the feminist methodology applied in this book to reach women's voices.

The book deals with a study across different generations and disciplines on gender and justice, which reveals the long-standing injustices and undemocratic attitudes that women face, by voicing and studying the lives of ordinary women teachers.

How are the capabilities and agency of three generations of the interviewed women teachers expanded and restricted throw out their lives from the republican era to contemporary in the Turkish context? These questions are posed by the author in the book and she tried to answer them through the chapters of the book.

How could these women make their way up to become teachers, in contrast to the majority of Turkish women? To what extent has education in Turkey been liberating for them? To what extent were these women capable of being agents of social change and justice?

These questions are intended to furnish and understand the professional, social, personal lives of women, and to examine the way how gender has interfered with women's use of agency and enactment of freedoms.

The book presented a list of the author such as Nussbaum's conception of capabilities, capabilities based on agency, and a list of capabilities proposed by the author. Then, the book presented the history of gender politics and the educational context of Turkey.

In the book, the author was exposed to historical events in different periods, political parties of the right and left sides as well as political conflicts resulting from these circumstances in Turkey, despite the slow progressive positive change.

In this book, the writer raised the history of women's and educational movement during the study of female teachers in three different generations: the first generation covers the republican women (Kamalist), the second generation collects the Amazon women (Nationalist), whereas the third generation collects the postmodern women (Conservation).

The book has emphasized the inequalities existing in the education regarding both males and females for cultural reasons, the traditions of the society, and the inequality in

education, including the girls' access to education, the problems in the curriculum, and the education system as well as the teachers' underrepresentation in managerial posts and the gendered way of teaching. The author conducted semi-structured life history interviews considering the comprehensive and detailed nature of life history and the involvement of a small number of participants. In life history research, the author had 15 (3 in the first group, 6 in the second group, and 6 in the third group participants).

The women's educational experiences showed that education opened up opportunities that they were culturally deprived of their private spheres. It contributed to their capacity to participate in democratic life, develop authentic expressive voices, and construct a life they valued for living, widening their opportunities to make life choices and giving them the necessary resources to secure their future well-being. It also became apparent how the sociopolitical context was also determinant in the educational experiences of all generations.

The context interferes with the educational system and its practices determine which capabilities are more likely to be developed. For instance, we could see the state ideology of building a nation offering a gendered education based on strong, Kamalist and Nationalist, so that they could be active participants of political revolution of the Republican era and act as representatives of the new modern Turkish women; such an education enabled the necessary conditions for women to achieve all their valued capabilities and to reach lives they value. The political context of Amazon women triggered the capability expansion of their political ideas and women adopted activism as an essential part of their lives.

In addition, schools were also gendered sites of power and created inequalities concerning learning and teaching: that's the kind of work women can do, the subjects they could study. We could see how this inequality causes women to perform reserved, shy, obedient girl identities.

This suggestion of gender inequality at schools is much more associated with informal spaces of schools such as families. In addition, the labor market and the institutions shape gender roles such as who does the care work and who becomes more prominent in discussion making.

In this sense, schools are the back garden for social realities and to extend the reflects of gendered practices and cultural codes. Nonetheless, schools and education can also transform some of the gender inequalities of the private sphere, but they have limited ability to develop their skills and potential.

This is because education, particularly in Turkey, usually reflects the cultural hegemony of the ruling class and state and does not ensure equality. Whatever their agenda is

(imposing conservative or Nationalist education), developing a balanced perspective and education toward gender equality is never priority. Therefore, prevailing masculine norms and patterns remain deeply rooted in education and offer women a marginal space to truly achieve whom they want to be. Generally, the women's education opened up spaces and freedoms, which would otherwise not have been possible.

One of these freedoms was their ability to take up work and to take their place as professional women in the public sphere. This is a significant aspect of this book in terms of outlining how these women (empowered by education) are engaged in education to work for gender.

This book presents an original research project situated on feminism and education literature, drawing the links between women's lives, education, and gender literature. Capabilities in this research allow us to understand what kinds of freedoms are available to women, why and how they reason to value these freedoms in creating a good life, well-being and agency, and continuities and changes in the freedom of women teachers in Turkey have reason to value.

These women's lives illustrate how gender justice is an issue of patriarchal mindset and institutions, rather than the lack of legislation and legal provisions. Granting an equal right is regarded as an achievement and measure of gender equality. To leave the exciting gender ideology and patriarchal nature, institutions, therefore in this research, the women continued to be discriminated against work based on their gender and faced inequality opportunities with regard to their access managerial positions. Implications of how schools disempowered students or girls were evident in women's professional life.

In overall understanding, especially concerning gender justice, education, and human development, the book deals with the history of social movements including feminist political theories in the United States and the United Kingdom in addition to several literature. The author has focused on three different approaches to think about gender justice, which are recognition and redistribution, democratic participation, representation, and a social contract to establish a universally applicable but contextually gender-sensitive gender justice approach based on diversity, which could be applied in education.

As a result of the research conducted by the author, the context interferes with the educational system and its practices determine which capabilities are more likely to be developed. For instance, we could see that the state ideology of building a nation offered a gendered education based on strong, Kamalist and Nationalist, so that they could be active participants of political revolution of the republican era and act as representatives of new modern Turkish women.

The political context of Amazon women triggered the capability expansion of their political ideas and women adopted activism as an essential part of their lives.

In the Nationalist perspective, generally, the women's education opened up spaces and freedoms, which would otherwise not have been possible. These women's lives illustrate how gender justice is an issue of patriarchal mindset and institutions, rather than lack of legislation and legal provisions. Granting equal rights is regarded as an achievement and measure of gender equality, leaving the exciting gender ideology and patriarchal nature institutions in touch.

The book is highly recommended as it is an excellent resource for researchers and scholars looking for issues related to oriental women and gender. In terms of accuracy and objectivity, the book is very well prepared in sequence of the narrative of the historical events that have passed on the Turkish people and the challenges faced by the intervention of politics in all aspects of life.